

ENTERTAINMENT

Everybody Needs an Agent

Our goal is to conglomeratize the world. We try to maximize everything vertically and horizontally. It's a natural flow of men reaping the harvest to the fullest extent. These are vast plans with the sweep of empire.

—Sam Weisbord, president of the William Morris theatrical agency

Things are humming along nicely at William Morris this year. Norman Brokaw, a vice president of the giant agency, recently put the finishing touches on nine separate book, TV and employment deals for Gerald R. Ford and his family (Betty Ford was reportedly considered even more "bankable" than

sip and disaster pass for biography and history and where, in Weisbord's words, "everything is of interest and there's nothing that cannot be utilized." Thus, former Sen. Sam Ervin of Watergate fame is now promoting American Express on TV. Free-lance agent Lawrence Schiller has won "the rights" to market Gary Gilmore's death. Cosmopolitan magazine's editor, Helen Gurley Brown, has asked Patty Hearst to write an article on the subject "everything a Cosmo girl needs to know about not burning up in a fire." Everybody who wants to make it has to have an agent—from the President's brother, Billy Carter, to decathlon champion Bruce Jenner's dog. Once, the lines between show business, politics, journalism, sports and the news media were sharply drawn.

landed him a fat book deal but assured him that whatever he writes can be spun off profitably by his new agents. With its tentacles reaching into every aspect of show business, it's not far-fetched imagining William Morris arranging a paperback sale, a movie sale, perhaps a novelization of the screenplay, a TV special or mini-series, a soundtrack album and appearances for Walters on news programs.



AP photos

Big deals: 'Bankable' Betty Ford, Gary Gilmore, and the Bruce Jenners with their dog



Tim Kelly—Salt Lake Tribune

her husband). Meanwhile, William Morris's biggest rival agency, International Creative Management, has been busy packaging another new millionaire, Henry Kissinger, who is planning his memoirs and contemplating his future as a commentator on NBC. ICM fared less well last month when one of its agents briefly but unsuccessfully canvassed publishers to see if there was any interest in a book about the Hanafi Muslim terrorism in Washington, D.C.—even as the lives of the 134 hostages were being bargained for. "The value dropped because only one person died," explains Daniel Okrent, editor-in-chief at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Today, it's getting hard to tell one field from another.

For Brokaw, 50, who began in the William Morris mail room at 15, the Ford deals were his finest hour. "An agent," says the Gucci-clad superagent from behind his Gucci desk set, "is someone who can mount the canvas and paint the picture." "Four hundred years of experience went into making that deal," declares Weisbord, who's been with the company for 50 years. "It's the highest form of agency there is."

At the same time Brokaw was finishing with the Ford deals, Weisbord was landing another new client—the former deputy director of the CIA, Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters. Walters's experiences as interpreter for three presidents not only